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Making Minnesota Territory, 1849-1858

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Making Minnesota Territory, 1849–1858, edited by Anne R. Kaplan and Marilyn Ziebarth. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1999. 112 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, timeline, notes. \$15.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY DAVID A. WALKER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

The Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) celebrates the sesquicentennial of the founding of Minnesota Territory with the publication of a special issue of *Minnesota History*, the Society's quarterly. In a format reminiscent of the Summer 1988 issue of the *Palimpsest*, Iowa's popular history magazine, historical articles link an essay on material objects in the MHS collection, a brief sampling of the contemporary built environment, and a description of appropriate historic sites. Scattered throughout, eight highly personal sketches depict daily life that reflects the racial, gender, and ethnic diversity of early Minnesota.

Following Iowa and Wisconsin statehood, the remaining upper Midwest extended from Lake Superior to the Missouri River. The land still belonged to the Dakota and Ojibwe tribes but was interspersed with groups of traders, missionaries, government agents, and lumberjacks. Rhoda Gilman skillfully reviews the major treaties by which native people gave up claim to what became the state of Minnesota. An excellent map graphically depicts those land cessions. Individuals in control of the Indian trade, especially Henry Sibley, played a major role in treaty negotiations and were primary recipients of money tribes received for their land. Indian trade not only profited individual entrepreneurs and companies, but also was the driving force behind the territorial economy.

Indian trade also played a role in determining future state boundaries. Similar to Iowa's experience, boundary controversy formed a thread running through territorial political maneuvering. The primary division was between St. Paul-based businessmen with ties to the Indian trade and the Democratic Party and southern Minnesota agricultural interests who represented newer residents, most of whom were Republicans. This controversy led to a comic-opera struggle to locate the state capital. Historian Bruce White relates the half fiction, half history account of territorial legislator Joseph Rolette Jr., who was accused of "stealing" a copy of the legislation in order to prevent relocating the capital from St. Paul south to St. Peter. White's article, appropriately titled "The Power of Whiteness," deals with the political and economic contribution of mixed bloods, nearly 60 percent of the non-Indian population at the time of statehood.

William Lass, a prolific scholar of Minnesota history, looks at the issue of the territory's image as a "perfect eden." That booster mentality

was encouraged by a wide variety of sources: guidebooks, land speculators, leaders of organized settlement colonies, thousands of tourists who were part of aggressive railroad advertising, newspaper editors, and government officials, such as governors Alexander Ramsey and Willis Gorman. In a separate article, Jane Carroll relates the story of the openly partisan journalistic voices. Counteracting reality, promoters emphasized Minnesota's climate, health, water and timber resources, and agricultural potential. "A favorite ploy was to emphasize Minnesota's centrality—not its northness" (59). Defensive about any criticism, boomers often drew a direct connection between winter conditions and the hearty character of residents, an image still perpetuated a century and a half later.

"Day in the Life" sketches of residents add a personal dimension to the territorial story. Included are depictions of interactions between Dakota and Ojibwe people struggling to control their ancestral land; descendants of European fur traders and their Indian wives; and Swiss, Irish, African-American, and Swedish immigrant women.

Everyone associated with this publication should be proud of the final product. The scholarship is solid and highly readable, based mainly on primary and selected secondary sources. Five maps enhance the text, as do magnificent reproductions of contemporary paintings and photographs. Careful editing is evident throughout. This is simply a beautiful piece of work that should attract the interest of scholars and a wide reading audience.

Political Abolitionism in Wisconsin, 1840–1861, by Michael J. McManus. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1998. xiv, 288 pp. Notes, tables, bibliography, appendix, index. \$39.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY VERNON L. VOLPE, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT KEARNEY

Following years of reinterpretation of antebellum politics and society, revised studies of individual states are most appropriate. Political historians who have reexamined the opponents of slavery and the origins of partisan loyalties have raised questions about the antislavery origins of the Civil War while also criticizing antislavery forces for an inconsistent commitment to racial equality. Wisconsin, like Iowa, represented an important "western" Republican state that opposed slavery's expansion, and thus warrants special analysis. Michael McManus has attempted to meet this historiographic need with a detailed study of abolitionist politics in Wisconsin. While partially fulfilling this function, other aspects of the work remain surprisingly disappointing.

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